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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 001590

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PARM PREL MASS IT EUN

SUBJECT: EU ARMS EMBARGO ON CHINA: MORE ITALIAN VIEWS

REF: A. ROME 1342

¶B. SECSTATE 68263

CLASSIFIED BY: POLITICAL MINISTER-COUNSELOR TOM COUNTRYMAN FOR REASONS  
1.5 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) EMBASSY OFFICERS ON APRIL 7 AND APRIL 22 FURTHER ENGAGED ITALIAN OFFICIALS (REF A COVERS OUR INITIAL CONTACTS) TO PRESS U.S. CONCERNS ABOUT EU CONSIDERATION OF LIFTING ITS ARMS EMBARGO ON CHINA. DIEGO UNGARO, DIRECTOR OF THE MFA'S OFFICE OF DEFENSE INDUSTRY AND SENSITIVE TECHNOLOGY TRANSFERS, TOLD ECONOFF EARLIER THIS MONTH THAT ITALY RECOGNIZED THE POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS OF ENDING THE EMBARGO ON DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL COOPERATION. UNGARO, A PROponent OF THE U.S.-ITALY DEFENSE TRADE RELATIONSHIP, THOUGHT THERE WOULD CONTINUE TO BE A LACK OF CONSENSUS WITHIN THE EU ON ENDING THE SANCTIONS, AT LEAST IN THE NEAR TERM, GIVEN THE STRONG HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS IN MANY MEMBER STATES (INCLUDING ITALY) AND WITHIN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT. UNGARO SUGGESTED IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO STRENGTHEN THE EU CODE OF CONDUCT ON ARMS EXPORTS INTO A LEGALLY-BINDING INSTRUMENT, ALTHOUGH HE GAVE NO INDICATION THAT THIS WAS ANYTHING MORE THAN HIS PERSONAL OPINION.

¶2. (C) POLMILOFF ON WEDNESDAY RAISED THE EMBARGO AND ITS LINK TO OUR ONGOING DEFENSE TRADE REVIEW (REF B) WITH BRIG. GEN. GIUSEPPE BERNARDIS, CHIEF OF ACQUISITIONS IN THE NATIONAL ARMAMENTS DIRECTORATE. BERNARDIS IS A STRONG SUPPORTER OF THE U.S.-ITALY DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONSHIP. "I HAVE SPENT THE LAST FIVE YEARS TRYING TO STEER ITALY INTO CLOSER COLLABORATION WITH THE U.S.," HE EMPHASIZED. BERNARDIS SAID HE WAS AWARE OF OUR CONCERNS AS THEY HAD BEEN CONVEYED TO ITALIAN MOD OFFICIALS AT THE MARCH 30 U.S-ITALY DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT CHINA HAD TO BE HANDLED CAREFULLY BECAUSE OF ITS POTENTIAL TO BECOME A MILITARY SUPERPOWER AND THE LACK OF CLARITY ON "WHICH WAY IT WOULD GO". BERNARDIS WAS INTERESTED IN KNOWING WHETHER SECRETARY POWELL HAD RAISED THE EMBARGO ISSUE WITH FM FRATTINI DURING THEIR APRIL 20 MEETING. POLMILOFF ASSURED BERNARDIS THAT PREVENTING ARMS SALES TO CHINA WAS A PRIORITY FOR THE SECRETARY AND FOR OTHER SENIOR U.S. POLICYMAKERS.

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